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ABSTRACT

An interview between a college counselor and client, comprising 54 dyads, was used to demonstrate a classification system for counselor retrospections. The interview and subsequent counselor retrospections and client reactions were recorded, transcribed, and coded. After intercoder agreement was established, contingency analyses were computed. In general, six retrospective dimensions were not closely related to concurrent counselor behaviors nor to measures of client satisfaction. Most frequent counselor retrospections and behaviors and a factor analysis were interpreted in terms of descriptive information. These findings were compared with those of four other interviews. In this case, the single case method seems appropriate to data which are highly individual, personal, and intricate. Results imply that counseling is an art in which thought pattern is more important than exact thought at a point in time. This is valuable for counselor training and practice as well as for analyzing complex idiosyncratic phenomena. (Author)

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A PENNY FOR YOUR THOUGHTS:

COUNSELOR BEHAVIORS AND CLIENT SATISFACTION

AS A FUNCTION OF COUNSELOR RETROSPECTIONS

By

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A PENNY FOR YOUR THOUGHTS!

COUNSELOR BEHAVIORS AND CLIENT SATISFACTION AS A FUNCTION OF COUNSELOR RETROSPECTIONS[1]

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ABSTRACT

An interview between a college counselor and client, comprising 54 dyads, was used to demonstrate a classification system for counselor retrospections. The interview and subsequent counselor retrospections and client reactions were recorded, transcribed, and coded. After establishing intercoder agreement, contingency analyses were computed. In general, six retrospective dimensions were not closely related to concurrent counselor behaviors nor to measures of client satisfaction. Most frequent counselor retrospections and behaviors and a factor analysis were interpreted in terms of descriptive information. These findings were compared with those of four other interviews. Implications for theory, training and practice and problems in analyzing complex idiosyncratic phenomena were discussed.

1. Prepared for presentation at AERA annual meeting in San Francisco, April, 1979.

2. Mildred Thompson was the experimenter for the case of Rob. Steven Eichel and Stuart Kurlansik were the coders. Wendy Weiner analyzed the data in consultation with Andrew Baggaley.

What do professionals think about as they practice? As part of an ongoing project we analyzed the case of Rob to demonstrate a classification system for counselor retrospections. We related the retrospections of Dr. S., a college counseling psychologist, to his interview behaviors and to his client's expressed satisfaction. We hope to identify possible uses of counselor retrospections in training, practice and research.

Perspectives

Although research in social psychology and personality suggested that in natural situations the links between thought and action are complex and idiosyncratic, we were aware of few attempts to classify the retrospections of a practitioner and to relate them to the counseling process. An exception is Kagan (Kagan, Krathwohl & Miller, 1963) who has developed interpersonal process recall as an auxiliary procedure in psychotherapy and in counselor education. In building a reliable and meaningful classification for counselor retrospections, we assumed that an inductive approach to a series of single cases would be appropriate. The following N = 2 study illustrates a test of the classification system at its present point in development. Our research questions for a particular counselor-client were (1) which counselor behaviors, counselor retrospections, and client ratings were most frequent and (2) to what extent, if at all, were counselor behaviors and client satisfaction a function of counselor retrospections? Descriptive reports on the participants and comparable studies of four other counselor-client interviews facilitated interpretation.

Methods

Participants: Dr. S., a 45 year old black male, the director of the guidance and counseling center at a state college, and his client, Rob, a 20 year old black male college freshman, majoring in business administration. Rob, who reported difficulties in personal adjustment, was seeing Dr. S. on a regular basis. Both participants volunteered and were assured of confidentiality.

Experimenter: An advanced graduate student under the direction of the investigators who were coinstructing a research seminar.

Materials: Two cassette tape recorders, three tapes.

Procedure: Along with four other seminar students, E first discussed and rehearsed the procedures in class. Then E instructed Dr. S. to record a counseling session with Rob. Immediately after the interview, E set up a second tape recorder and read Dr. S. the instructions for retrospecting. She requested Dr. S. "...to stop the tape whenever you wish and say aloud what you were saying internally to yourself at the moment..." E left Dr. S.'s office until he completed the retrospection task. The following day E met with Rob. As she played back the recording of his session with Dr. S., at the end of each dyad she turned off the recorder and asked Rob to rate the dyad, using a second tape recorder. Finally, E transcribed the counseling session, the retrospections, and the client reactions.

Measures: (1) The counselor's statements, following DiLoreto (1971) were classified as reflection, questioning, interpretation, advice giving, self-disclosure, reinforcement, or other. (2) Each concurrent counselor retrospection was coded on the basis of a manual, previously developed by the investigators, which defined with examples six independent dimensions: time frame, place, focus, locus of control, orientation, and mode. (3) For each dyad, there were also concurrent client ratings on a five-point Likert scale for helpfulness and for understanding. Two graduate students (not E) learned the coding systems for counselor behavior and counselor retrospections and then rehearsed them on comparable dyads (not Dr. S.) until they reached at least 80% agreement. One coder classified the transcript of the counselor's retrospections. Spaced samples of 10 statements were drawn from the beginning, middle, and end of the transcripts and were audited by one of the investigators for accuracy.

The development and rationale for the counselor behavior measure is discussed in detail in DiLoreto (1971). A manual prepared by the investigators (Dole, DiTomasso, Johnson, Sachs, and Young, 1978) presents additional information about measures of counselor retrospections such as definitions and examples, and theoretical rationale. In Exhibit 1, the categories in the six dimensions are defined briefly.

Data Sources: After three tapes were transcribed and coded, 54 counselor-client dyads were treated as the basic units. Client satisfaction ratings were available for 53 dyads. Since there were 73 codable counselor behaviors and 161 codable counselor retrospections, we applied a prorating procedure. For each of the dimensions, the sum of observations on a particular dyad were adjusted to equal 1.00. That is, the formula

$\frac{t_c}{t_d}$ was applied consecutively to the observations about a dyad, with t_c = all observations assigned to a particular category and t_d = all observations assigned to a particular dimension. Besides adjusting for unequal observations about a dyad, this procedure facilitated subsequent analyses.

A separate IBM card was next prepared for each of the 54 dyads and the concurrent counselor retrospections (6 dimensions), client satisfaction ratings (2 scales) and counselor behavior punched in. Frequency distributions and first order correlations were computed. After discarding low frequency categories and no retrospections, the 22 remaining categories were factor analyzed using varimax rotation.

Transcriptions and descriptive reports by E were also available for consultation. Furthermore, applying methods just described, four different E's collected data on counselor-client interviews in a private junior college, a mental health center, a four year college, and a psychiatric sheltered workshop. It was thus possible to compare the results with four other studies.

Dr. S. relied most heavily (Table 1) on questioning during his session with Rob, who rated him approximately half the time as very strongly helpful and very strongly understanding. In his retrospections Dr. S. tended to concentrate during the interview on present events outside of the session involving the client and his internal world; he was professional rather than personal and reported neutral cognitions more often than planning or than positive or negative affect. For almost one third of the dyads, Dr. S. did not retrospect.

The two measure of client satisfaction were not significantly associated with counselor behavior nor with client retrospections. Except for reflection, the counselor retrospections tended to be independent of counselor behaviors. (Table 2). An absence of reflection was slightly but significantly associated with out-of-session place, client focus, external locus, professional orientation and neutral mode.

Eight factors were extracted, accounting for the highest loadings on 22 categories (Table 3). Of these, five (1, 2, 4, 5, 8) involved only retrospections, one (6) counselor behavior, and one (3) client behavior. Only one factor (7) linked a counselor retrospection with a behavior.

Discussion

In each of the five cases we have analyzed we found low and usually nonsignificant relationships between counselor retrospections and counselor behaviors and client satisfaction. In each instance we identified a distinctive profile of counselor retrospections, whether expressed as category frequencies or factors. Dr. S., an experienced therapist with a client-centered orientation, in his retrospections of a particular session was highly professional, cognitively objective, concentrating on here and now and on Rob's phenomenology out-of-session rather than his behavior. Overall, Rob was a satisfied client.

The six counselor retrospection dimensions represent potentially fruitful ways to conceptualize the thoughts of the practitioner. Further research may help to identify new dimensions or to simplify and combine. The single case method seems appropriate to data which are highly individual, rich, personal, and intricate.

A word about data analyses. We attempted to adjust for unequal N's in three different scoring schemes before correlating measures. We may have introduced artifacts. The adaptation of multivariate methods to two person microsystems over time poses a challenge.

What are then the implications of our study for training, theory, and practice. Counseling perhaps is an art in which the exact thought at a point in time is less important than the pattern. In contrast to our research, Peterson and Clark (1978) analyzed reports by teachers of their cognitive processes. Differences in styles were related to teachers' planning statements and to student achievement and attitude. The complex relationship between thought and interpersonal process may vary by specialty and function as well as by individual.

References

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DiLoreto, A. Comparative psychotherapy. Chicago: Aldine-Atherton, 1971.

Kagan, N., Kratwohl, D.R., and Miller, R. Simulated recall in therapy using videotype: a case study. Journal of Counseling Psychology, 10, 1963.

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EXHIBIT 1

COUNSELOR RETROSPECTION DIMENSIONS

A counselor retrospection is coded on six dimensions, treated independently. For each dimension one category as defined below is assigned on the basis of the counselor's target. The target of the retrospection may be an event, experience, thought, feeling, person, statement, etc.

Dimension	Category	Target
TIME FRAME	Historical Past:	Occurred more than two weeks prior to session.
	Recent Past:	Occurred within the two week period up to present.
	Present:	Occurring now.
	Future:	Will or may occur after the moment.
PLACE	In session:	Entirely the counseling experience.
	Out of session:	Entirely or partially outside of counseling.
FOCUS	Client:	Primarily or partially the client.
	Counselor:	Primarily the counselor.
	Counselor/client:	Counselor and client viewed as single unit.
LOCUS	External:	Entirely public, verifiable by direct observation, overt.
	Internal:	Primarily or partially covert, as inferred private event, label, state, attribute.
ORIENTATION	Professional:	Entirely in context of professional relationship.
	Personal:	Primarily or partially out of professional context.
MODE	Neutral:	Recalled without evaluation, little affect.
	Planning:	Intervention or course of action.
	Positive:	Recalled with satisfaction, approval, sympathy, or pleasure.
	Negative:	Recalled with dissatisfaction, anger, impatience or doubt.

TABLE 1

ROB - OBTAINED AND ADJUSTED FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTIONS ON COUNSELOR BEHAVIORS, CLIENT SATISFACTION AND COUNSELOR RETROSPECTIONS

Dimension	Category	Obtained f	Obtained %	Adjusted f	Adjusted %
Counselor Behavior	Reflection	16	22%	9.17	16%
	Questioning	44	60	37.00	69
	Information/Advice	8	11	4.50	8
	Interpretation	1	1	1.00	2
	Reinforcement	1	1	1.00	2
	Self-disclosure	--	--	----	--
	Other	3	4	1.34	2
Counselor Retrospections					
Time	Historical Past	14	9%	2.67	5%
	Recent Past	25	16	5.88	10
	Present	86	53	19.85	37
	Future	36	22	8.61	16
Place	In session	63	39	13.64	25
	Out of session	98	61	23.31	43
Focus	Client	126	78	29.02	54
	Counselor	25	16	5.48	10
	Client/counselor	10	6	2.59	5
Locus	External	28	17	4.26	8
	Internal	133	83	32.64	61
Orientation	Professional	151	94	35.10	65
	Personal	10	6	1.93	4
Mode	Neutral	110	68%	25.22	47%
	Planning	19	12	4.99	9
	Positive	16	10	3.95	7
	Negative	16	10	2.85	5
All	Retrospections	161	100	37.00	69
	No Retrospections	--	--	17.00	31
Client Satisfaction					
Understanding	Very strongly	26	49		
	Strongly	15	28		
	Moderately	7	13		
	Minimally	2	4		
	Not at all	3	6		
Helpful	Very strongly	28	53		
	Strongly	14	26		
	Moderately	7	13		
	Minimally	--	--		
	Not at all	4	8		

Note: Within each dimension total category ratings on each dyad were adjusted to equal 1.00. That is, observations per dyad were weighted according to the for ula t_c/t_d where t_d = all observations about a dimension and t_c = observations in a category.

TABLE 2

ROB-SIGNIFICANT CORRELATIONS BETWEEN

COUNSELOR BEHAVIORS AND RETROSPECTIONS

Dimension	Category	Reflection	Questioning	Information/Advice
Time	Historical Past	--	--	.39**
Place	Out of Session	-.36**	--	---
Focus	Client	-.33**	--	---
Locus	External	-.28*	--	---
Orientation	Professional	-.31*	--	---
Mode	Neutral	-.28*	--	---
All	No retrospections	.26	--	---

*p < .05

**p < .01

TABLE 3

ROB - HIGHEST FACTOR LOADINGS

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Reflection						703		
Questioning						-896		
Information/Advice							791	
Historical Past							795	
Recent Past					845			
Present	801							
Future				934				
In Session								701
Out of Session	866							
Client	936							
Counselor		781						
Client/Counselor					837			
External					566			
Internal	877							
Professional	879							
Personal		923						
Neutral	889							
Planning				968				
Positive								911
Negative		788						
Understanding			966					
Helpful			971					

Note: Highest loading on each variable reported. All values multiplied by: 1,000.